

Is LBI land washing away?

Motel owner concerned about erosion

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BY JOHN VANDIVER
MANAHAWKIN BUREAU

LONG BEACH TOWNSHIP — Swaths of sand continue to wash into the ocean at the southern end of Long Beach Township, where the barricade that holds together a sand parking lot is eroded and at risk of collapsing, according to a township resident.

Motel owner Bill Hutson has been calling on township officials to take action in the area that leads to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. He eyed the damage Monday and became exasperated. Pulling out a cell phone, Hutson called Township Commissioner Ralph Bayard.

"We got to lean on Bob to do something now," Hutson told the commissioner, referring to Commissioner Robert Palmer, who is in charge of the township's Department of Public Works. "It's ready to collapse."

Without immediate steps to protect the area, the parking lot and sand road that lead into the refuge are in danger of being wiped out by a major storm, said Hutson, owner of the nearby Lorry's Island End Motel.

As Hutson fretted about more potential damage from a looming snowstorm, Beach Haven resident Chuck Toro quietly strolled near the crumbling barricade.

"I would think they'd want to protect it," the 47-year-old Toro said.

Hutson, who recently raised his concerns at a meeting of the Township Commission, said installing a rail of boulders around the barricade would be an immediate solution to a growing "public safety threat."

Palmer, who has had conversations with Hutson about the issue, said it's been that way for some time.

"It's nothing to get overly concerned about," he said Monday.

Nonetheless, Palmer intends to make an appeal to representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers next week during a community meeting involving issues related to a long-planned replenishment project.

The island-long replenishment project, which has been developing for about 50 years, includes \$5.67 million in federal money, \$3 million in state funding, and approximately \$400,000 each from Ocean County and local municipalities. No starting date for sand pumping has been determined.

But the southern tip of the township is not part of the replenishment effort, and Palmer said it should be.

"They're going to be out in that area," he said. "That would be so minuscule. It would be a drop in the bucket."

The Dec. 13 meeting will focus primarily on oceanfront land owners, who are asked to grant property easements to federal authorities so replenishment work can be conducted.

To secure the area near the road that leads to the refuge, about 10 dump trucks filled with sand are needed, Palmer estimated.

However, Hutson, who wants immediate action on the barricade, said if a major storm blows through now, "it's going to take the whole thing."

He said boulder-sized jetty rocks needed to secure the area would cost about \$10,000.

Palmer said he's having the township's engineer examine the boulder solution.

"If it'll help, we'll do it," he said.

John Vandiver: (609) 978-4584 or jvandiver@app.com

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